



Edgewood rugged solar power bank

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We've often heard back-and-forth discussion in the survivalist community about the true meaning of going off-the-grid. Many will say that the term means immediately abandoning all electronic devices. We can understand this sentiment, since a worst-case off-grid situation would leave you completely and permanently disconnected from modern infrastructure. That means no internet, no cell signal, no GPS, no radio or TV reception, and no access to electricity at all.

A USB power bank is one of the most valuable assets for the task of keeping your small electronics running without direct grid access. Much like a stockpile of food to maintain your physical strength or a reserve fuel tank to keep your vehicle running, a power bank provides an instant backup electricity source. This is especially helpful given the prevalence of USB-rechargeable devices. These days, it's easy to run all the electronics in your get-home bag on this universal system with the aid of a few different cables.

A good power bank provides a short-term source of juice, but like any other battery it's bound to run out eventually. When charging from a wall outlet or a vehicle's 12V socket isn't an option, supplementing your power bank with a solar panel is a wise choice. With a solar panel, you can recharge your devices from the battery, and recharge the battery from the sun. Now your temporary backup just became a long-term solution.

Admittedly, the most effective solar panels are huge, expensive, and sensitive to weather conditions, and even these are unlikely to recharge your power bank as fast as a wall outlet or car charger. Smaller portable panels offer lighter weight and more durability, but they'll require several days of full sun to recharge a power bank. Solar isn't always the most convenient power source, but if it's the only one you've got, you'll definitely be glad to have it. This is why we always make a point to have some type of lightweight solar panel in our bug-out and camping gear loadouts.

We recently had the opportunity to test a power bank from RAVPower, namely the Exclusives 25,000mAh Solar Power Bank. This outdoor-oriented unit features a reasonable \$50 retail price, and a huge capacity of 25,000 milliamp-hours (mAh). That's enough to fully recharge these devices the following number of times:

The RAVPower 25,000mAh power bank also features an integrated 5-volt / 300 milliamp solar panel. It features a green LED indicator in the top left corner that lets you know when the panel is receiving sufficient sunlight. Under ideal conditions, RAVPower says the panel will replenish the 25,000mAh battery in 85 hours.

The solar panel is recessed and protected by the power bank's rubberized case, which is impact-resistant and IP66 waterproof and dustproof. It also features indentations on the sides and ridged corners for added grip and impact protection. At the bottom of the case, there's also a folding metal loop where an included carabiner can be used to attach the power bank to your backpack or other gear while the solar panel does its thing.



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The first two smaller USB ports are on the side of the case, while the other two full-size USB ports are on top. Both pairs are protected from the elements by rubber flaps, maintaining the waterproof/dustproof rating when they're not in use. RAVPower designed the power bank with Quick Charge and iSmart compatibility, which deliver up to 3 amps to maximize the charging speed for compatible Android and Apple devices. It can also provide up to 5V/6.4A through the three output ports to charge three devices at full speed at the same time.

There's another trick feature on this power bank's input system that allows it to be charged through either the Micro USB port or the USB-C port, or through both simultaneously. This means you can push up to 4 amps of juice into the device by using two wall sockets and two 2A chargers (or one outlet with multiple 2A ports). The graphic below from RAVPower compares the recharging speed for all three of these options:

On the back side of the power bank, you'll see the clearly-labeled on-off button as well as four blue LEDs. These LEDs indicate the battery level while the unit is being recharged, charging other devices, or if the user taps the power button.

The last noteworthy feature of the power bank is its integrated LED flashlight. Pressing and holding the power button for 3 seconds activates the light, and additional short presses cycle between constant, slow flashing, and SOS modes. RAVPower doesn't advertise an output rating for the light, but we'd estimate it's around 100 lumens. The relatively-wide beam pattern makes it useful for map-reading and other up-close tasks.

We carried the RAVPower 25,000mAh Solar Power Bank around in a pack with the rest of our EDC electronics kit. Our standard kit includes various USB cables as well as a 2.4A wall charger, a 12V cigarette lighter adapter, and a few other small items. Until we received the 25,000mAh power bank, we had been using a RAVPower 16,750mAh unit that served us well for several years.

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